

# ASPIRA

An  
Investment  
in Latino  
Youth

Visit our website:  
[www.aspira.org](http://www.aspira.org)



# WHAT IS ASPIRA?

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. is the only national nonprofit organization devoted to the education and leadership development of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth.

Since 1961, ASPIRA has pursued its mission of empowering the Latino community through the development of its youth. All of ASPIRA's goals and activities spring from one basic belief: Puerto Ricans and Latinos have the collective potential to move their community forward.

*Since its formation over 40 years ago, ASPIRA has grown from a small nonprofit agency in New York City to a national association with statewide Associate organizations in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico, and its National Office in Washington, D.C.*

ASPIRA's 500 staff members work with over 25,000 youth and their families each year to develop that potential. These are our *Aspirantes*--those youth who will become the future educated, committed leaders of their community.

Since its founding, ASPIRA has provided a quarter of a million youth with the personal resources they need to remain in school and contribute to their community. Most mainland Puerto Rican leaders today were encouraged by ASPIRA during their adolescence.

# **ASPIRA'S MISSION STATEMENT**

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The ASPIRA Association promotes the empowerment of the Puerto Rican and Latino community by developing and nurturing the leadership, intellectual, and cultural potential of its youth so that they may contribute their skills and dedication to the fullest development of the Puerto Rican and Latino community.

Based on this philosophy, the ASPIRA Association has defined its mission as follows:

*To empower the Puerto Rican and Latino community through education, leadership development and advocacy*

## **ASPIRA'S HISTORY**

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In 1961, Dr. Antonia Pantoja and a group of Puerto Rican educators and professionals created ASPIRA (which means "to aspire" in Spanish), to address the exceedingly high dropout rate and low educational attainment of Puerto Rican youth.

They were convinced that the best way the Puerto Rican community would develop its full potential was to focus on the education of young people, and to develop their leadership potential, self esteem and pride in their cultural heritage. This ensured that youth would become not only productive members of society, but leaders in the development of the community. ASPIRA conveyed in its

name the expectation that Puerto Rican youth could succeed if they dared to aspire.

After extensive research on youth, ASPIRA founders developed a process for leadership development that remains at the core of all ASPIRA activities: *The ASPIRA Process*.

## **THE ASPIRA PROCESS**

Over the years, ASPIRA has developed a highly successful intervention model called the ASPIRA Process. The model consciously accentuates the positive, putting the stress on developing the potential of *Aspirantes*.

The ASPIRA Process of leadership development teaches youth to become aware of their current situation, to analyze its consequences, and to take action for change in their personal lives and in their community. ASPIRA brings together students, parents, schools and community members to promote educational success and community service. ASPIRA also works with foundations, corporations, and the government to improve educational opportunities for these young Latinos.

## **OUR LOGO - THE PITIRRE**

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The *pitirre* is the symbol of ASPIRA. A small tropical bird found in Puerto Rico, the *pitirre* is known for its agility, rapid flight and ability to outsmart, tire and defeat much larger birds. ASPIRA believes that the *pitirre* is a fitting symbol for young Latinos. *Aspirantes* gain the confidence of the *pitirre* by acquiring knowledge and developing their leadership skills. They face and overcome seemingly overwhelming odds to become productive adults, bringing to their communities the benefits of their skills and leadership abilities. The symbol of the *pitirre* reinforces ASPIRA's belief that even the smallest and seemingly powerless can take control of their lives and cause change.

## **THE ASPIRA ASSOCIATION**

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ASPIRA's National Programs include:

Youth Ventures Entrepreneurship Program  
ASPIRA National Health Careers Program  
ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence  
ASPIRA HIV Prevention Program  
ASPIRA Math and Science Academy (MAS)  
and CASA MAS  
Bridging the Digital Divide in the Hispanic  
Community  
NHTSA - Promoting Buckle up America

Within the next year, ASPIRA will be expanding to over 100 communities across the country through its technology centers.

These local offices, along with ASPIRA's broader network of 5,000 community-based organizations, school districts, local and national policy makers, and corporate representatives, receive information and assistance from ASPIRA'S National Office in Washington, D.C.

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